

Reminder:

Grants are available for environmental education partnerships between a local community and their national wildlife refuge. *Nature of Learning* grants are available up to \$5,000 for a first year grant, and up to \$3,000 for a second and third year grant.

This announcement closes April 17, 2006.

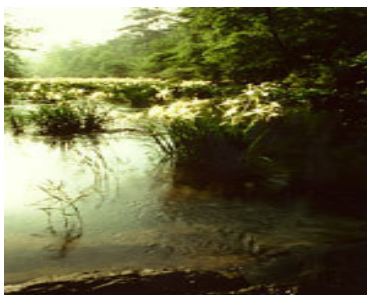
Interested parties should apply at <http://www.fws.gov/refuges/> by clicking on Announcement Details and Application. Contact Kim Chumney with any additional questions.

For additional information, contact:

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Project Manager
The Keystone Center
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Bill Garland, Biologist

Cahaba River National Wildlife Refuge is located 20 miles southwest of Birmingham, Alabama along the scenic Cahaba River. This 3100 acre refuge was established on September 25, 2002 and is one of the newer additions to the National Wildlife Refuge System. The Cahaba is Alabama's longest free-flowing river and provides habitat for more fish species than any other river of its size in North America. The river currently supports 64 rare and imperiled plant and animal species, 13 of which are found nowhere else in the world.



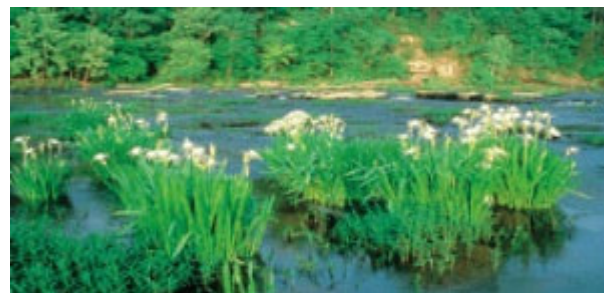
Although the refuge is currently unstaffed, Fish and Wildlife Service personnel from nearby refuges and local citizens contribute to an actively growing visitor and outdoor education program with unlimited future potential. The refuge area has long been envied as an escape from the modern urban world to a region of peaceful rivers and broad forests. During the spring, the West Blocton Improvement Committee sponsors the "Cahaba Lily Festival", which brings visitors from all over the region to view expansive shoals covered by flowering Cahaba River lilies. The success of the refuge can in large part be attributed to the pride and commitment of the local community for ensuring the river is protected and available for the benefit of future generations.

Refuge visitor facilities are rather limited at present. The three mile river road has recently been graveled to provide easier visitor access. Interpretive trails are in development and will provide visitors a better understanding of the refuge physical landscape and biological communities. A Friends group is in the early stages of establishment and will provide expanded opportunities for volunteers and education programs in the very near future.

The Cahaba River Society has been a "Nature of Learning Grant" recipient and funds outdoor classrooms on the refuge for local Bibb County schools. Students have the opportunity to spend a day participating in a field ecology program where they receive hands-on field experience in one of the most biologically diverse rivers systems in North America. Many, for the first time, collect and identify macro-invertebrates from under rocks and seine for fish in the river. Students learn what biological organisms live in a free flowing river and why we should value this rare and disappearing ecosystem. With the energy and commitment of local volunteers, the refuge is expected to become a shining star within the National Wildlife Refuge System.

(for more information about the Cahaba River FWS visit the site:

<http://www.fws.gov/southeast/cahabariver/>



Wild Words for Wild Wings

2 FEATURED PROJECT

at the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge
A project that opens young eyes to new worlds

Sandy Beck, Education Director

PROJECT SUMMARY

Through classroom presentations with permanently disabled birds, teacher workshops, three seasonal (fall, winter and spring) birding field trips to the St. Marks Wildlife Refuge and a student presentation at the Wakulla Wildlife Festival of a collaborative, student-created "Guide to the Birds at St. Marks," this project provides fourth grade teachers with engaging interdisciplinary instructional activities which focus on both resident and migratory bird species at the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge and the habitats we share. Teachers are also provided with appropriate resources and support that enable them to develop and field test relevant content-based extensions to teach both critical and creative thinking and basic skills.



Fourth Grade Classes at
Hartsfield Elementary
Tallahassee, Florida
2004 - 2005



Birds at the St Marks Wildlife Refuge



GOALS

- ✿ Teach responsible stewardship of our natural resources.
- ✿ Develop engaging, interdisciplinary instructional activities.
- ✿ As a result of participating in these activities, students will:
 1. Acquire skills associated with bird watching such as: observation, classification, listening, patience and inference making.
 2. Use these skills and predetermined clues to identify birds, adaptations which enable them to survive and the different habitats in which they live.
 3. Use visual arts and poetry to articulate their experiences, observations and perceptions particularly as these relate to their birding trips to the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge.
 4. Create a PowerPoint guide to the birds at St. Marks that empowers the students to share what they learn and inspire others to become birders.

RATIONALE

Tallahassee's proximity to the St. Marks Wildlife Refuge, the dedicated "Gateway to the Panhandle Section of the Florida Birding Trail," offers unique and spectacular bird watching opportunities.

Birding is a great way to introduce children to the wonders of wildlife diversity. Ideally, teaching children to identify birds and what they need to survive moves children closer to caring about them and ultimately to caring about the lands the birds need.

From *The Orange Dove of Fiji: Poems for the World Wide Fund for Nature*: "Poetry can reach parts of the mind that simple facts and statistics cannot reach. The will to conserve our fellow plant and animal inhabitants depends on two things: an understanding of the problems and a commitment to do what is necessary to solve them. The facts are easily established; it takes the language of the poet to stimulate commitment."